

# The Hope Diamond Mystery — by M

## The Startling History of This Fascinating Stone, the "Curse" That Has F for Fourteen Centuries and the Story of the Ruined Life of May Yohe, Who Once Owned It and Wore It.

**T**O find herself mistress of the palace of an English Duke, with jewels outrivalling the jewels of many a crowned head, with London town house, country estates, castles, shooting preserves—would probably fulfill the happiest dreams of millions of American women.

And yet May Yohe, the daughter of a Pennsylvania country dressmaker, had all this in her grasp—AND THREW IT ALL AWAY.

May Yohe, the petted and beloved wife of Lord Francis Hope, was also to share with her husband the added title and still greater estates of the Duke of Newcastle. Was it the malevolent power of the unlucky Hope Diamond that then intervened and blighted her life?

The story of May Yohe's career will be told from week to week in these pages by May Yohe herself. Few plots in drama or fiction equal the extraordinary real life experiences of this remarkable American girl.

And the "curse" of the famous Hope Diamond?

Something, indeed, seemed to cast its sinister shadow over her life and pursued her relentlessly in America, in Asia, throughout Europe and even in South America. May Yohe discusses this famous gem which once was hers, and reveals much of its past history which has not before been made public—history which began with its theft from the sparkling ornaments of the Buddhist idol fourteen hundred years ago and drags its sinister trail down through the centuries to the shocking death of little Vinson Walsh McLean, whose parents now own the "cursed" stone.

Jean Baptiste Tavernier came into possession of the stone in 1642, stolen from the sacred golden statue of Rama, in the Temple of Rama and Sita, Burmah, India. Tavernier was torn to pieces by wild dogs.

Madame de Montespan, who wore the jewel, was abandoned by the King.

Nicholas Fouquet, Intendant of France, who borrowed it for a festive occasion, was executed by order of the King.

Queen Marie Antoinette, who wore it, was beheaded.

The beautiful Princess de Lamballe, who wore it, was torn to pieces by a French mob.

King Louis XVI., who owned it, was beheaded.

Hendrik Fals, the diamond merchant's son, who stole it, was a suicide in London in 1830.

The first of the Hope family who bought it suffered a long series of misfortunes, including the death of his favorite son.

Simon Frankel, New York broker, who bought it for \$168,000 in November, 1901, met financial difficulties.

Jacques Colot, another owner, was afflicted with madness and committed suicide.

Prince Ivan Kanitovski, next owner, was killed by revolutionists.

Lorenz Ladue, to whom he loaned it, was murdered by her lover.

Simon Montherides, who sold it to the Sultan Abdul Hamid, was thrown over a precipice while riding with his wife and child; all were killed.

Zubaya, the Sultan's favorite, was killed by her master.

Abdul Hamid paid \$400,000 for the stone. He was dethroned.

Jehver Agha, an official of the Yildiz, attempted to steal the stone and was hanged.

Selim Habib, Persian diamond merchant, who had handled the gem, was drowned.

January 11, 1911, Mrs. Edward B. McLean, of Washington, D. C., bought it, wore it and was sued by Cartier, the jeweler.

In May, 1919, her only child, little Vinson McLean, the "Hundred-Million-Dollar Baby," was crushed to death under an automobile.

Nothing else in all history, nothing in fiction or the drama parallels the extraordinary record of this sinister jewel, which is related for the first time by a remarkable woman whose own life was blighted by its wicked "curse." This will be told from week to week on this page.

By May Yohe (Lady Francis Hope)

### CHAPTER IX.

(Continued from Last Sunday)

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**T**HE news of my marriage to Lord Francis, after our six months' trial of life together, of which I told last week, fell like a bombshell over London—as, indeed, it did over New York. London Johnnies staged many celebrations the night of the announcement in the all-night clubs and at theatre stage doors. Proud and distinguished was the Johnnie who could boast of having had a supper with or an introduction to the new Lady May—yelept May Yohe.

Now I, the poor dressmaker's daughter, was in line for the strawberry crown of a duchess, for my husband was heir to the Duke of Newcastle, one of the most conservative and wealthiest Dukes in the empire. The Duke was my husband's brother. He is childless, so at his death Lord Francis will become the Duke—and if Lord Francis should die first then his oldest son will inherit.

As the prospective Duchess of Newcastle I was in line to be mistress of famous Clumber Castle, the Newcastle seat since time immemorial. This old castle is filled with old masters, wonderful furniture and art treasures of immense value. The estate consists of 35,600 acres of land. Directly in front of the castle is a lake covering a hundred acres, and throughout the immediate grounds are numerous pieces of old and priceless statuary.

The most splendid apartment in the castle is the State Drawing Room, adorned with gilt carvings. It contains ten beautiful old cabinets from the Doge's Palace at Venice. On its walls hang Van Dyck's "Rinaldo and Armida," said to be the greatest work of that master, and a number of family portraits by Sir Thomas Lawrence. Clumber is packed from garret to cellar with art treasures, the Sevres and Dresden porcelain being unrivalled.

The present Duke has built a splendid private chapel on his estate in Gothic style. This is almost a cathedral in size. There May Yohe might have worshipped in state.

Another seat of the Duke is Forest Farm, in Windsor Forest. His town residence is Berkeley House, in Mayfair, London.

Among the hereditary and more or less ornamental honours held by the Duke are Master Forester of Dartmoor and Keeper of St. Bravel's Castle. He is also a Knight of Grace of St. John of Jerusalem, Lord High Steward of Retford, etc.

The Duke is Lord of the Manor of Worksop, and as such has the hereditary right to provide a glove for the right hand of the King and support the King's right hand at his coronation.

The Duke has an income of \$600,000 a year, largely due to coal mines on his property.

It is really very interesting to think of all the court honours that might have fallen to me in the fulness of time.

Lord Francis had inherited from his mother the great Deepdene Castle and estate, quite close to London. This is one of the most beautiful of the suburban residences, and has been occupied frequently by the Duchess of Marlborough and other famous English duchesses. This house, like Clumber, contains many rare paintings and works of art. The Hope Diamond also came to Lord Francis from his mother, who, as the daughter of a wealthy banker, Thomas Hope, brought a large fortune to the Newcastle family, and when she died left it to her second son, Lord Francis. Lord Francis' correct name is Pelham-Clinton, the family name of the Duke of Newcastle. He assumed the "Hope" that the name of his mother's family might not die out.

The country residence of Lord Francis is Castle Blaney, in County Monaghan, Ireland.

All these became mine when I became Lady Hope. And they would yet be mine if it had not been for the evil influence which threw Putnam Bradlee Strong across my path.

When I was formally introduced to society in London as the prospective Duchess of Newcastle I wore, for the first time, the great diamond.

This was a dinner given by Lord Alfred de Rothschild. It was my first society recognition, and my presence caused a great sensation.

The Prince of Wales was to be a guest, but he arrived late. When he came in there already was a tacit agreement among the others that they would snub poor little May Yohe. The Countess de Mannin walked by me with her nose upraised, looking me over quite superciliously. The Duchess of Edinburgh, whose husband had just accepted the crown of the grand duchy of Coburg-Gotha, walked up to me, looked at me and walked away as stiff as you please.

But when the Prince came in what did he do but walk straight up to me. When I curtsied he said:

"So glad, Lady May, to see you here. Now I know we won't be dull. I don't know where they have put me, but I hope they have put you beside me."

Of course there was a scurrying about to see that I was placed beside him. Then it was funny how the Countess de Mannin and the Duchess of Coburg-Gotha fawned upon me. My readers may be assured I snubbed them good and plenty.

About 5 o'clock in the morning, the dinner still in progress, I said to the Prince: "My goodness, it is getting late and I have a rehearsal at 10 o'clock. I've got to go home."

"But I can't get up," said the Prince.

"What's the matter? Are you glued to your chair?" I asked.

"My dear little lady," said the Prince, "don't you know my brother, the Duke of Coburg-Gotha, is a reigning monarch now, and no one can get up until he does? But wait, I'll fix it."

He caught the eye of the Duke and made a sign. The Duke rose at once. The Prince then got up, took my arm and led me to the stairway and saw me down the steps. After that I was as popular as Lady Francis Hope in society as I was as May Yohe on the stage.

I was very happy when I went home that morning with the Hope Diamond blazing about my neck.

My experiences in London society will make a chapter of this story all by itself. I am going to tell about them a little later on. I want to tell now, after describing Lord Francis' entry into my life, how differently the other entered it—how Putnam Bradlee Strong, the Beau Brummel, the cosmopolitan and roue, came, lured by the Hope Diamond and his hopes of acquiring it and others of my costly jewels.

London society led a miserable, artificial life. There was some good in it and a great deal of bad and indifferent. Everything seemed to be built around "prestige" and "sets." A duchess, of course, was always honored and courted above a mere baroness or "lady." But if the baroness or the "lady" was a friend of the Prince of Wales or some one of the royal family, then society curtsied to the duchess, but courted the baroness or the "lady."

The glamor of this social prestige wore away. I was happy, however, with my husband, despite certain shortcomings, of which, I suppose, every good man must have his share. Lord Francis liked to read a great deal—he used to read a book when I thought he ought to be reading me. He liked to hunt, too—and I often felt that he might have spent some of the time hunting ways to enamor me that he spent hunting ways of trapping animals or catching fish.

In 1900 I was finishing a trip around the world with Lord Francis—a trip I shall tell of later, which brought me much adulation and lavish entertainment. During this trip I met many famous men, and some of them obtained Lord Francis' permission to make me presents. Captain James Holford, of the Horse Guards, for instance, was a guest of Lord Francis on board the Hope yacht at

Cowes just before we started on this trip. During the evening he said to me:

"You are the most beautiful little woman I have ever seen, Lady May. I wonder if your husband would object if I should send you a little souvenir to remember this evening by?" I told him to ask Lord Francis, and he did so. Months later, when we were at Ashanti, South Africa, there was delivered to me at the hotel a package which when opened disclosed a diamond necklace, with a huge diamond pendant. With it was a card on which was written simply, "The souvenir I spoke of. Wear it and think of me who love you for the splendid little woman that you are."

The card was signed Holford.

Captain Strong pawned that jewel later for \$9,000. We were sailing, Lord Francis and I, from New York to Southampton as the last leg on our world wide trip. On the same boat passage was booked for Captain Strong, who had been assigned by President McKinley to France for the army manoeuvres there. I never had met Captain Strong, but my attention was attracted to him when he came aboard, accompanied by a group of army officer friends, who had come to see him off. He was a striking figure in his dapper uniform, very military and romantic. Some one told me he was the son of the former Mayor of New York and one of the handsomest men in the regular army.

My cousin, Thomas Parke, a Philadelphia broker, was on board, going with us to London. That evening Tom came to me, saying, "I find I have an acquaintance on board, Captain Strong. He wants to meet you. He said he was struck by your beauty, and when he learned you were Lady Francis Hope he begged me to present him."

I told him I would be pleased to meet Captain Strong, and he was presented as soon as Lord Francis could be found. My cousin confessed to me that evening that he had not known Captain Strong, but that the latter had obtained an introduction through the captain of the boat.

Throughout the trip Captain Strong was most attentive. He cultivated Tom assiduously, and these two became fast friends. My cousin was a great admirer of me, and Captain Strong, learning this, sang my praises day and night to him. Tom brought me all the good things Captain Strong had to say about me, and I was quite flattered, for Captain Strong soon became the life of the ship. He was a fascinating man, with a suave gallantry which charmed women. I never have known a woman who, after being thrown in Captain Strong's company for a while, did not fall in love with him—wife or maid or widow, it was always the same.

Lord Hope paid little attention to my activities. He professed to be pleased that I should enjoy myself, and was satisfied to be a spectator to my triumphs. Captain Strong was most respectful to him, and seemed to know just how to humor him. Strong drew me out about my early experiences, and was wonderfully sympathetic when I told him of my early troubles and enthusiastic when I recounted my successes. He knew men and women attached to every court in Europe, and was a splendid conversationalist.

He made no advances to me at all during the trip. Had he done so I would have repulsed him without hesitation. Instead, though, he talked to me of my husband, and congratulated me for keeping "an English lord" in love with me. "They are so careless about their women usually, you know," he said, echoing just what was in my heart, "and once they have caught them think the romance-job is done. Instead, a man should be a sweet-



May Yohe and her jinricksha and picturesque native attendant.

heart always, I think—always planning to humor his wife, to surprise her with little unexpected attentions, to keep her on the same distant plane she occupied as his fiancée. You should be happy to have found a Britisher who still remains your lover."

Of course, Captain Strong knew I hadn't found a Britisher who thought it worth while to still be my sweetheart. He just acted as if he thought that, knowing that he was hitting me in a vulnerable spot, without my realizing that he knew. Unconsciously I began to think how much happier I would be and how much brighter the world would be if my husband were as attentive and thoughtful as this Captain Strong evidently would be if he were in my husband's shoes.

When a woman begins to think of that comparison between her husband and another man she is slipping. If the other man is clever he will land her for the fall. And Captain Strong was beyond all things else clever.

When we reached Southampton the Duke of Newcastle met us with a special train. Strong was near by when the Duke approached and was presented to him. Lord Hope made the presentation, saying to his brother, "Captain Strong is a good friend. He made the trip across very pleasant for us."

The Duke invited the Captain to go up to London with us on the Duke's train, and during the trip he extended this invitation to include dinner with the ducal party at the Carlton.

For this dinner I got out all the Hope jewels and my own as well and picked from them the most attractive, including the Hope Diamond. Something prompted me to want to look my best, although at that time my thoughts of Captain Strong never had strayed from the boundaries imposed upon a good wife. Yet, somehow, I wanted to impress this gentleman of the world who had been so attentive to me. It was the first sign of what was to come.

The gown I wore was a replica of the gown worn by the Empress Eugenie in her most famous painting. With the big diamond shining at the bodice and my own jewels, more than half a million dollars' worth, supplementing it, I must have been very impressive.

That evening Lord Francis invited Strong to accompany us and spend a few days at Folkestone, a country place of ours. My mother was staying here while we were going around the world. He accepted, of course, and during the next few days there he almost ignored me, so busy was he with attentions to Lord Francis. I instinctively knew, however, that he was playing a game—although I did not admit it to myself, or I might have been warned. He merely was making up to Lord Francis, my husband, so he could pay me attentions with more safety later on.

Sure enough, after a few days, when I annoi need that I was going to Paris to see some theatrical agents who